

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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ICA-11 HA-05 /082 W
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R 191552Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7492
INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 1221

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, SF
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LEADER VIEWS THE CURRENT SCENE

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN COLIN EGLIN, THE CURRENT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION JUST CONCLUDED HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY THE SAG'S PATCHWORK APPROACH TO SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT. MAJOR LEGISLATION AND CONTROVERSIAL COMMISSION REPORTS WERE PUT OFF. DURING THIS SESSION, ACCORDING TO EGLIN, PARLIAMENTARY ATTENTION WAS SEIZED PRIMARILY BY INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND THE INFORMATION DEPARTMENT SCANDAL. EGLIN BELIEVES THAT CONNIE MULDER MIGHT NOW RECEIVE ONLY A PLURALITY OF SUPPORT IN THE NAT CAUCUS. EGLIN FEELS THAT THE NAT'S SENSE OF CONFIDENCE IN THEMSELVES AND IN THE FUTURE IS WANING. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO MAKE LIMITED CONCESSIONS, HE ASSERTS, IT IS PROGRESSIVELY TIGHTENING UP ITS REPRESSION OF DISSIDENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE POLITICAL COUNCSLOR JUNE 12, PFP LEADER AND OFFICIAL OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN, COLIN EGLIN, REVIEWED THIS YEAR'S PARLIAMENT SESSION. EGLIN SAID THAT FOR A
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VARIETY OF REASONS, MAJOR LEGISLATION AND CONTROVERSIAL COMMISSION REPORTS WHICH HAD BEEN EXPECTED THIS SESSION WERE NOT TAKEN UP. THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS, LABOR REFORMS, THE NEWSPAPER BILL, THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE '76 RIOTS, AND ACTIVATION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY INTERNAL SECURITY COMMISSION ALL FAILED TO MATERIALIZE. THE DELAY WAS DUE PARTIALLY TO LACK OF

PREPARATION BECAUSE OF THE SURPRISE ELECTION SHORTLY BEFORE THE SESSION BEGAN IN JANUARY AND PARTIALLY TO TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS BY THE GOVERNMENT.

3. THUS, THERE WAS NO FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE TO PROVOKE A MAJOR IDEOLOGICAL BATTLE. INSTEAD, EGLIN SAID, THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED ITS PATCHWORK APPROACH TO SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT, INTRODUCING A NUMBER OF AMENDMENTS, SOME OF WHICH WERE IMPROVEMENTS FOR BLACKS, WHILE SOME WORSENERED THE SITUATION.

4. PARLIAMENTARY ATTENTION DURING THIS SESSION, ACCORDING TO EGLIN, HAD BEEN SEIZED BY INTERNATIONAL ISSUES AND THE INFORMATION DEPARTMENT SCANDAL. THE MOST IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT, EGLIN THOUGHT, WAS THE NEGOTIATIONS OVER NAMIBIA. IN ORDER NOT TO PROVOKE THE GOVERNMENT, THE OPPOSITION HAD TREATED NAMIBIA AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ISSUES IN LOW KEY SO LONG AS DEVELOPMENTS ON THE FORMER SEEMED TO BE MOVING AHEAD. EGLIN SAID THAT THE PFP HAD HEARD THAT FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA HAD PUT OUT THE WORD PRIOR TO THE FINAL FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE THAT THE NATIONALISTS SHOULD MODERATE THEIR LANGUAGE. THIS MESSAGE WAS POORLY HEARD BY THE BACK BENCHERS, BUT BOTHA'S MODERATION WAS WELCOME. EGLIN, HOWEVER, DID NOT KNOW HOW LONG IT WOULD LAST.

5. THE INFORMATION DEPARTMENT SCANDALS, EGLIN SAID, HAD GIVEN THE PFP THE OPPORTUNITY OF APPEARING RELEVANT TO THE WHITE POPUL-
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ATION. THE SCANDALS AND OTHER ISSUES TOOK PLACE IN THE CONTEXT OF AN INCREASING CONCENTRATION WITHIN THE NATIONALIST RANKS ON THE BUILDING SUCCESSION STRUGGLE. EGLIN BELIEVED THAT CONNIE MULDER HAD BEEN HURT BY THE SCANDALS AND IF THE DECISION WAS MADE TODAY, HE WOULD PERHAPS RECEIVE NO MORE THAN A PLURALITY OF SUPPORT IN THE CAUCUS. IN A RECENT PRIVATE CHAT AT A DINNER PARTY, EGLIN SAID MULDER HAD REITERATED TO HIM THE THESIS THAT TO WIN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY, IT WAS NECESSARY TO BE RIGHT OF CENTER. MULDER TOLD EGLIN THAT THE PARTY WOULD MOVE FORWARD BUT IT WOULD ONLY DO SO UNDER A LEADER WHO WAS BELIEVED TO BE BASICALLY CONSERVATIVE AND WHO THUS MADE CHANGES ONLY BECAUSE THEY WERE NECESSARY FOR SURVIVAL.

6. EGLIN WONDERED WHETHER THE PFP WAS BECOMING INURED TO NATIONALIST INSULTS, BUT HE FELT THAT ATTACKS BY THE NP ON HIS PARTY WERE SOMEWHAT LESS ACRIMONIOUS THAN THEY HAD BEEN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SESSION. HE ALSO SAID HE THOUGHT THE PFP HAD BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE IN HIGHLIGHTING ISSUES AS THE SESSION WENT ON.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 1221

7. EGLIN SAID THAT HE SENSED A CREEPING MALAISE AMONG THE NATIONALISTS. THEIR SENSE OF CONFIDENCE IN THEMSELVES AND IN THE FUTURE WAS WANING. WHEN MULDER ANNOUNCED IN PARLIAMENT THAT EVENTUALLY THERE WOULD BE NO BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS, THE NATS DID NOT REALLY BELIEVE HIM. WITH THE EROSION OF THEIR FAITH IN THEMSELVES EGLIN SAID, THE ISSUE NATS WERE BECOMING MORE CYNICAL IN THEIR EXERCISE OF POWER. THUS, WHILE THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO MAKE LIMITED CONCESSIONS TO NON-WHITES, AT THE SAME TIME IT IS PROGRESSIVELY TIGHTENING UP ITS REPRESSION OF DISSIDENCE.

8. EGLIN SAID THAT THE NATIONALIST PARLIAMENTARIANS WERE THEMSELVES NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSAL, NOR OF COURSE WERE COLOREDS AND INDIANS. EGLIN PREDICTED THAT VORSTER WOULD GRADUALLY INSTITUTE THE NEW STRUCTURE IN A WAY THAT WOULD AVOID POSING THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE TO ANY OF THE GROUPS CONCERNED AS A "YES" OR "NO" SITUATION. HE SPECULATED THAT NEXT YEAR THE COLORED REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL AND THE INDIAN COUNCIL WOULD NOMINALLY BE TRANSFORMED INTO PARLIAMENTARY STATUS AS AN INITIAL STEP. IN THIS WAY, EGLIN SAID, VORSTER WOULD HOPE TO TRAP THE COLORED
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AND INDIAN LEADERS INTO PARTICIPATION IN THE NEW SYSTEM.
STILL, HE CONCLUDED, THE NATS WOULD HAVE TO CONTINUE TO TINKER

WITH THE STRUCTURE TO TRY TO MAKE IT MORE ACCEPTABLE AND WORKABLE
AND THIS WOULD CREATE A CERTAIN DYNAMIC FOR CHANGE.
EDMONDSON

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